

OTE 84 - 1202

23 February 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Administration

STAT FROM:

Director of Training and Education

SUBJECT: Office of Training and Education Response to
the Grace Commission Report

1. The Office of Training and Education reviewed three segments of the Grace Commission Report on areas of concern to OTE, namely, Instructional Television Production Facilities, Duplication of Supervisory Training, and Executive Seminar Center Operations. The comments from the three OTE units involved in these activities are attached.

STAT 2. Any questions concerned with the OTE response should be
STAT directed to

Attachment

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22 February 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Officer, OTE

STAT FROM:

Chief, Management and Administrative Training
Division

SUBJECT: Comments on Grace Commission Report

1. On first impression, the Grace Commission Report's rationale for centralizing the task of developing the first-line supervisor's knowledge and skills in the area of personnel management, is excellent. Further examination of the implications of this approach to the Agency, however, makes such a proposal less attractive.

2. The Grace Report bases its recommendations on the assumption that a centrally controlled training effort under the direction of the Office of Personnel Management will result in better (and less costly) management training. This presupposition, in our view, is highly questionable, running against what makes the Agency program very successful. Some of the reasons for the excellence of our program are: our ability to conduct training through consultation, in a way that meets Agency- and component- specific needs; our ability to act quickly and with a minimum of bureaucratic hassle; and our ability to modify the program with almost complete autonomy. In our opinion, centrally controlled programs, especially by big bureaucracies such as OPM, will not produce high-quality programs for the Agency. More specifically, our management program is highly Agency-specific in terms of policy, regulations, and procedures. While it is true that PAR's and AWP's, the IG grievance system, the EEO complaint system, and Agency Personnel Evaluation System - some of the areas covered in the Management Development Course - contain generic principles and procedures, they also contain elements which are and will continue to be Agency-specific. Thinking that it will be equally effective to present instructional material, including cases and examples, set in a non-Agency context, is foolish. To cite an example, when I was Deputy Director of EEO, I was partly instrumental in hiring an outside instructor who coincidentally was a former OPM instructor, to develop two EEO courses for managers and EEO counselors. Although the instructor was excellent, the feedback on both courses tended to be negative because they failed to couch the EEO

administrative process in the content of the Agency. After changes were undertaken to make the courses more useful to the audience, they had already ceased to be generic.

3. The following comments apply to the six Grace Commission Report recommendations regarding management programs:

PER 14-1: It is not a good idea to undertake another major study to determine what kinds of generic training meets the universal training needs for supervisors in different agencies. In general, human resource development experts agree on what that program should contain and, in fact, an inspection of the FY 84 OPM catalog should confirm that the OPM program is on target. If a study is undertaken anyway, it should concentrate on how training could best be delivered to meet specific agency needs, rather than on what the program should contain. The latter can be ascertained easily by consulting some good literature resources and a few respected experts.

PER 14-2: OPM should perhaps play a role in the development of high-quality courses by which supervisory skills can be mastered, especially for agencies without a well developed training program. Our experience, however, shows that generic supervisory development programs must be modified significantly to meet the Agency's needs.

PER 14-3: We agree that trainers involved in the conduct of first-line supervisory training must be qualified in terms of instructional skills as well as knowledge of the subject matter. As part of our current certification program, which is very intensive, we could send our instructors to appropriate OPM courses.

PER 14-4: We agree that a system should exist to ensure that an agency's first-line supervisors possess the knowledge and skills to competently exercise their managerial and supervisory duties and responsibilities. The Agency due to valid and not so valid reasons unfortunately does have such a system and, consequently in many instances we pay a heavy price for less than competent personnel management. We feel, however, that a central mechanism to ensure training for managers should be internal rather than centralized at OPM.

PER 14-5: We agree that there should be a monitoring system for proposals and contracts for the development of true generic supervisory training programs which duplicate programs that already exist. The implementation of this idea will help agencies avoid succumbing to the temptation of signing costly program development contracts with the myriad of "Beltway Bandits" who are ever ready and waiting to sell programs which can easily be obtained "off the shelf."

PER 14-6: We strongly support the idea of OPM providing a clearinghouse function for all agencies with respect to the availability and effectiveness of supervisory training programs.

4. Our last concern regarding the implications of the Grace Report deals with the conduct of training in a secure environment. While apparently there are no problems enrolling individuals in OPM courses, the registration of large numbers of employees might constitute a security problem, in light of OPM's registration forms requesting among other things, applicant's name, home address, organization address (Branch, Division, Office/Bureau/Agency), position title and function, and social security number.

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